

Speak Out – Speak Easy! Homelessness consultation

On Sunday, 7th December the Atrium in the Civic Offices hosted a gathering of 65 homeless individuals attending the 3rd *Speak Out – Speak Easy!* organised by the Dublin Community Forum's Homeless Focus Group. This event offered those with direct experience of homeless in Dublin City the opportunity to voice their concerns – which will be fed into Dublin City Council's decision-making structures through the Community Forum representatives on the Dublin City Development Board.

Those attending the meeting expressed particular frustration around several key issues including:

- The basic lack of emergency accommodation.
- Various aspects of the way the Night Bus operates.
- Having to leave accommodation during the day.
- The lack of places to go and things to do during the daytime.
- The difficulties experienced in trying to care for children while coping with homelessness.
- The unfair way many are treated in the emergency and transitional accommodation that is available.
- Having to undergo intrusive questioning and searching.
- No right to appeal when barred from Hostels.
- Having to sleep in premises where a blind eye is being taken to drug taking.

Much of the meeting focused on the lack of a voice for the Homeless Community and the need of get organised if these issues are to be addressed. A further meeting will be organized over the coming weeks to draw up an action plan on how best to highlight these issues.

Speak Out – Speak Easy! also took time to acknowledge all those who have died on the streets of Dublin whilst struggling with Homelessness. A beautiful display of flowers and wood was created by Patrice De Burgh to remember their lives and the creation remained on display in the Atrium for the remainder of the week.

The Homeless Focus Group is also planning a further conference entitled 'Housing First' which will be held on February 6th 2009. "Housing First" is an approach that is having great success in cities all over the world and involves homeless individuals being given a home (with adequate supports) as the very first step in addressing their needs.

Dutch homeless campaigner Rokus Loopik will be the guest speaker at this conference.

For information on the Homeless Focus Group and the Dublin Community Forum visit www.dublincommunityforum.ie